

REMARKS

The Official Action dated January 2, 2004 has been received and carefully noted. The period for response having been extended from April 2, 2004 until July 2, 2004, by the attached Petition for Extension of Time, the above amendments to the specification and claims, and the following remarks, are submitted as a full and complete response thereto.

The title and abstract have been amended to be more clearly descriptive of the invention as currently claimed. Claim 1 has been amended to correct a minor typographical error contained therein. No new matter has been added. Claims 4-7 having been withdrawn from consideration, claims 1-3 are respectfully submitted.

The Abstract of the Disclosure was objected to as containing reference to a non-elected invention. The Abstract and the Title of the Invention have been amended to cure this deficiency. A minor typographical error has also been corrected in claim 1.

Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Morrison. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection, and submit that the presently pending claims recite subject matter which is neither disclosed nor suggested in Morrison.

Claim 1, upon which claims 2 and 3 are dependent, is directed to an LNG carrier for transporting LNG from one location to another. The carrier is recited as comprising a vaporizer onboard an LNG carrier for vaporizing the LNG to a gaseous state. At least one heat exchanger is at least partially submerged in water, and an intermediate fluid

circulates between the vaporizer and the heat exchanger. At least one pump is provided for circulating the intermediate fluid. As a result of the claimed configuration of element, a self-contained LNG carrier is provided wherein liquid natural gas can be regasified either onshore or offshore, at each location at which LNG may be delivered. Applicant respectfully submits that Morrison fails to disclose or suggest the claimed invention, and therefore fails to provide the critical and unobvious advantages which are discussed above.

Morrison discloses an apparatus for transporting, storing, and using natural gas. the apparatus of Morrison includes a vessel 24, and a separate wharf 4 containing regasification elements therein. Vessel 24 does contain a boiler 38 and a tank 37 containing liquid natural gas 40 therein. Disposed on wharf 4, separate from the vessel, are brine chiller 54, cold chamber 56, and various pipes for circulating brine between cold chamber 56 and brine chiller 54. Lines 51 and 53 feed a eutectic such as Freon from vessel 24 to and from brine chiller 54. The Office Action seems to take the position that cold chamber 56 is comparable to the heat exchanger of the present invention, and that cold chamber 56 is at least partially submerged in water. However, it should be noted that the present claims are clearly directed to an LNG carrier comprising a vaporizer, at least one heat exchanger, the intermediate fluid, and at least one pump. A person of ordinary skill in the art can plainly see that cold chamber 56 as well as brine chiller 54 of Morrison are not at all part of vessel 24. Additionally, though the Office Action seems to take the position that cold chamber 56 is partially submerged, no such disclosure is seen

in Morrison. Quite to the contrary, cold chamber 56 is shown on the other side of a barrier from sea water, and the actual location of cold chamber 56 is unknown. Therefore, applicant respectfully submits that Morrison is an improper reference upon which to reject any of the presently pending claims since Morrison fails to disclose any element which could be comparable to at least one heat exchanger disposed on an LNG carrier. Furthermore, cold chamber 56 is not illustrated as being at least partially submerged in water. Additionally, there is no disclosure nor suggestion of any intermediate fluid in Morrison which circulates between cold chamber 56 and vaporizer 38. Cold chamber 56 seems to have brine circulating between it and brine chiller 54. A warm eutectic circulates between vaporizer 38 and brine chiller 54.

In view of the significant differences, applicants respectfully submit that a prior art rejection over Morrison is an improper rejection of any of the presently pending claims.

Paragraph 6 of the Official Action states refers to claims 1 and 2 and states "and as best can be understood in view of the indefiniteness of the claims." Applicant notes, however, that there is no indefiniteness rejection nor any indication in the Official Action of any indefiniteness of any of the presently pending claims. If the Examiner is of the opinion that these claims are indefinite for any reason, then an explanation of such indefiniteness is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3 are, however, rejected under 35 USC § 102(e) as being anticipated by Zednik (U.S. Patent No. 6,089,022). As will be discussed below, applicant respectfully

traverses this rejection, and submits that each of claims 1-3 recite subject matter which is neither disclosed nor suggested in Zednik.

The Official Action takes the position that Zednik includes vaporizer 25, and "at least one heat exchanger 50 at least partially submerged in water," and an intermediate fluid (sea water) circulating between the "vaporizer 25" and the "heat exchanger 50." Applicant respectfully submits that sea chest 50 of Zednik cannot be considered to be a heat exchanger, and that the configuration of Zednik is therefore significantly different than the configuration of the presently pending claims.

Zednik discloses a configuration which essentially does not include a heat exchanger separate from the vaporizer. Vaporizer 25 incorporates therein sea water as a heat exchange medium, to heat the liquefied natural gas thereupon. Sea water is pumped from outside of the vessel through an inlet line 40, into vaporizer 25, and out to the source through discharge line 41. Since Zednik fails to disclose a separate heat exchanger, therefore, Zednik cannot disclose or suggest an intermediate fluid circulating between the vaporizer and a heat exchanger. Sea chest 50 of Zednik is illustrated in Figure 3, and discussed in column 5 thereof. Sea chest 50 merely seeks to collect sea water from outside of the vessel, and provides a source of sea water to inlet 40. Inlet 40 takes the sea water from sea chest 50, supplies it to vaporizer 25, and then the sea water is discharged through discharge pipe through outlet 41. No heat exchange of any type occurs in sea chest 50. This is merely a holding tank for sea water which is then fed to vaporizer 25. Therefore, it is clear that a person of ordinary skill in the art that there is no

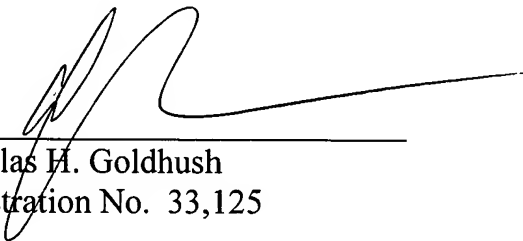
disclosure nor suggestion in Zednik of at least one heat exchanger at least partially submerged in water, nor any disclosure nor suggestion of an intermediate fluid circulating between the vaporizer and the heat exchanger.

In view of the above, applicant respectfully but strongly submits that each of claims 1-3 recite subject matter which is neither disclosed nor suggested in the prior art of Morrison or Zednik. Applicant submits that the subject matter is more than sufficient to render the claimed invention unobvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art. Applicant therefore respectfully request that claims 1-3 be found allowable, and this application passed to issue.

If for any reason the Examiner determines that the application is not now in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact, by telephone, the applicant's undersigned attorney at the indicated telephone number to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this application.

In the event this paper is not being timely filed, the applicant respectfully petitions for an appropriate extension of time. Any fees for such an extension together with any additional fees may be charged to Counsel's Deposit Account 50-2222.

Respectfully submitted,



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Enclosure: Petition for Extension of Time (3 months)